

Chenery Families Information Session
FAQ - 3.22.21

Where can I find Principal Koza's slides from the presentation?

Slides can be found [here](#).

Will my student have to change teachers? Will they stay on the same team?

We won't know if students need to change teachers until we see survey data and decide on which remote model we are using. Assuming we use the live-streaming model, at least for grades 6-8, we should be able to keep students with their current teachers.

How will teachers be assigned to in-person and remote cohorts if we go with a remote classroom model?

Once we have each student's survey response we will look at the data, understand the needs of each grade, and assign staff. We will try our hardest to keep students and teachers with their current teams. If there are any teachers who want to teach our remote students we will also take those preferences into account.

One important aspect of scheduling - in any school year - is the very thoughtful placement of students and construction of class cohorts. Teachers and administrators work to partner with families and to be as considerate as possible of each student's needs. We will be very careful about the choices we make within the constraints we have.

When will we know what teacher my child is getting?

As soon as we get the survey data we will start to figure out how the model will work. I can't give you a hard deadline but we will get it to you as soon as possible.

Is the possible change of teachers true for in-person and remote students?

Yes, particularly if we choose a remote classroom model.

Are any teachers going to be teaching remotely to in-person students?

We are working through individual human resource situations with our staff. Some staff members do currently have remote-only accommodations due to unique individual or family needs. We are talking to these staff members to see what, if anything, might change. We have reached out to each individual educator who qualified for a work-at-home accommodation/modification in the fall and are reviewing each case. We will know a lot more by the end of this week once our review and all conversations have occurred. Our hope is to have all educators return. There may be some people who need to remain remote based on their personal situations.

Will in person students in grades 7 and 8 keep their math teachers?

They will most likely remain with their current teachers, but again it depends on the mode of remote instruction that we choose. Students could end up changing teachers if we decide on a remote classroom model.

Why haven't you made a decision yet about remote classrooms vs live-streaming, and what factors will you weigh in making that decision?

Knowing the number of remote and in-person students will really help us understand what is possible. For example, if 90% of students return in-person (similar to the elementary numbers), then we would be looking at approximately 30 students in grade 5 staying remote. Normally our teams have significantly

more students in them than that so we would have to think about how to staff a class of this size. If we have 85% of students opting for the remote model, then the staffing would be different.

Neither model is perfect. We're talking about 42 days of school, and we want to make those the best possible 42 days no matter what remote model we choose. Different families want different things and we can only choose one remote model. We will make the best decision we can on behalf of children.

How will remote and in-person specials work - can you give us specific details about music, gym, and art?

The way we deliver remote specials will depend in part on which model we choose. The challenge of outdoor internet access may force some encore classes to have a remote component if live-streaming is in place.

Non-performing music classes and visual arts will look much the same as they have to date. Protocols are currently in place for safety and for sanitizing of materials, including instruments.

As for orchestra, the guidance for string playing is the same as the guidance for a regular classroom: 3 feet of distancing in addition to our other mitigation measures. Our string players will continue to play as they have been. The difficult issue is going to be finding spaces large enough for the classes, particularly when we take into account the need to use our large spaces for lunch and other large classes like P.E.

To play wind instruments or sing we are required to have 10 feet of distance between students. Students must also be masked while singing. For example, we would need a very large space to accommodate one 90-person chorus class with 10' distancing. This may not be possible, and we won't know for sure until we understand how many students will be in-person and what possibilities we will have for space usage. Our teachers have done a remarkable job of finding alternate activities when singing is impossible. We are working closely with parents and POMS (Parents of Music Students) to develop alternate activities until we have a situation that is safe for singing and wind instrument playing.

Is it possible to change instructional models, and if so, when will this happen?

Just as with elementary, there will be two dates - April 30 and May 21 - when families can change models. It may then take up to two weeks to make a decision and institute any changes, which will be based on space.

Can my student participate in some remote classes and some in-person (i.e., be a remote student but come to school for PE or other outdoor activities)?

This is very unlikely. We have not discussed this possibility yet, but I anticipate that it would be very complex and would be very difficult to institute.

How will teachers ensure assessments will be similar for remote and in-person students?

Our teachers have been working hard on this all year. It is a challenge to create assessments that work in both settings but they will continue to collaborate and grow in this area to make sure assessments are similar and fair. Benchmarks and end outcomes are aligned.

For families who would like to hear more about curriculum issues, tune in to [tonight's School Committee meeting](#). We will be hearing an update from our district Curriculum Specialists and Directors.

It seems like a remote-only classroom model would be disruptive for students, especially for students with IEPs. Why are you considering this model?

Yes, it may be disruptive in some ways. But the upside to a remote classroom model would be that teachers can give their undivided attention to one group of students using one mode of teaching, which

would be good for students. We do have remote students with IEPs who are currently being provided with all of their services in a successful way.

No model is perfect; each is disruptive in a different way.

The relationships our teachers have built this year are real and important, despite the various models in which they have been teaching. Any change of teachers is hard, especially for students with IEPs and students who are learning English. We are going to work very hard to keep those relationships intact while we also prioritize the academic experience. We will factor everything in and limit changes as much as possible.

Is there a way for students to continue to play wind instruments remotely?

We are trying to continue wind instruction for both in-person and remote students. We currently have two teachers for each band and could consider bringing in an additional person. We will also be trying to find safe ways for students to sing in-person. But a lot will depend on how many students we have and what spaces are available to us. We are going to continue to follow DESE guidelines. We will work with the Director of the Belmont Health Department, Wes Chin, and our Director of Nursing, Beth Rumley, to ensure that any plans are safe and in compliance with health guidance. We want to do as much as we can within the guidelines. But we are not going to rush to play wind instruments or sing on day one when we have a larger number of students back in the building. We will get students back in the building and do the best we can to build from there. And once we decide whether we are live-streaming or using remote classrooms we will create a plan for our remote music students.

What mitigation measures will be in place to make sure in-person students and teachers are safe? How will the school make sure that students are following the rules? How will you make sure that students wear appropriate masks?

We will work closely as a team - as we have been during our hybrid model - to keep everyone in the building safe. We have routines in place to ensure compliance; for example, we check kids as they walk in the door to make sure they are all wearing their masks properly. There is hand sanitizer in every classroom. Teachers monitor students to ensure proper spacing between individuals. Kids and teachers sanitize desks as part of their classroom routines. We have been largely successful with limited to no disease transfer in our building. Kids are used to the rules and are participating in keeping themselves and their peers and teachers safe, and that is great to see.

You will also see increased communication from our nursing staff as they continue to provide education and reminders to families. We count on our families to use the symptom tracker daily, to ensure that their children have masks that fit properly, and to reinforce the importance of following all of our mitigation measures diligently.

In light of the new CDC guidance supporting 3 feet of distancing in schools, has the definition of a “close contact” also changed?

According to the CDC, a close contact is still someone who was within 6 feet of a Covid-positive individual for 15 minutes or more over a 24 hour period of time. The definition has not changed even though the recommendation about student distancing in schools has changed. This means that we are at risk for having an increased number of close contacts. We need to really focus on very good mask-wearing and other mitigation measures.

Will there be any Covid testing for students?

The state has provided us with six weeks of free surveillance testing, a plan that came together quickly during the month of March and which we have implemented at the high school. We chose the high school as our pilot site because high school students move between classes and are not in any kind of cohort/pod, so they are therefore potentially in contact with a greater number of people each day. The

majority of our peer towns have chosen the same approach, either beginning testing with their senior class or with their entire high school. Two hundred students and 40 staff members at the high school are participating in this pilot project. If we find that the data we receive is helpful in our effort to provide a safer school environment, we will work to expand testing to a greater number of students.

We are also offering symptomatic testing to the staff at the high school.

No testing program will replace the importance of using the symptom tracker and keeping sick students at home. Parents have done a wonderful job of this. Please keep it up!

Can you provide more details about lunch and snack? Will lunch be outside? Can students leave for lunch?

We are looking to see how many spaces we can use to manage lunch (see [Principal Koza's slide deck](#) for more details). Options include four tents that will be set up outside, the gyms, and the cafeteria. We need to balance our needs for lunch space with other programmatic needs for large spaces (for example, gym and music).

Students will come through the cafeteria to get their lunch and then move on to the space where they will eat. There will be no touch points or pin pads. Students will sit 6 feet apart, all facing the same direction. We have purchased desks to use at lunch so that students will not be facing each other across a lunch table. We are not using plexiglass dividers on the desks, since according to the CDC this measure does not change distancing requirements and adds a sanitizing issue.

The feel of lunch will not be the same as it was pre-Covid, and will not provide the same opportunity for social interaction. This is one reason that we plan to maintain WIN blocks - to give students an opportunity to safely socialize and to move their bodies during the school day.

We will not be able to support students going home for lunch.

All meals will be free through the end of the year. Students may eat school lunch or bring their own food.

What will happen if Covid rates rise? Will we go remote again?

The Commissioner of Education and our Department of Elementary and Secondary Education have been very clear that they will not retreat from in-person learning. They are relying on the data suggesting that most spread happens in the home rather than in school. We have not yet received word on whether local municipalities can override that decision but we are asking for clarity.

If there is a spike of cases in Belmont, we would have the option of pivoting back to a fully remote program for a short period of time. We will rely on advice from the Belmont Board of Health and from our Director of Nursing Services, Beth Rumley.

Assuming 90 percent of students attend school in person, can classrooms hold the whole class or will they need to be split?

Yes, our regular academic classrooms can accommodate our needs. We have some outlying situations (in larger classes like gym, or in classes with different distancing requirements like chorus) where this is not true. We are working to find solutions to any situations where classrooms do not currently offer sufficient space.

Do you feel confident about the air quality with an increase in the number of people in the building?

Yes, we do feel confident about this. We are using the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health metrics to determine what constitutes a safe air exchange rate. We purchased over \$600k of air

purification units and filters and made changes to our ventilation system last August and September. We have purchased even more air purification units (for classrooms that haven't been in use yet) in recent weeks. Just this afternoon we spoke with the author of the Chan study and asked this exact question: is our air quality good enough to support more people in our buildings? The answer was that our setup will still work well for a larger number of students. Every classroom in the district already has adequate air exchange without open windows. Knowing that we can add an extra measure of safety by opening windows in April provides an added layer of confidence. We believe the school is equipped to handle the number of students and staff who will return in April.

Can my student opt out of chorus or other classes?

No, that won't be possible. We have no way of supervising them (from both a staffing and a space perspective). But our teachers are phenomenal and will only do things that are safe with students. We are going to follow the guidelines to a T and will most likely start the chorus and band experience without singing or playing wind instruments.

Will students share lockers?

No. Students will not have access to any lockers this school year.

Will students have mask breaks?

Yes. Each teacher will find their own way to offer mask break opportunities. WIN blocks are also a good time for mask breaks. At the beginning of the year we thought this would be a significant issue and need for students, but we are actually finding that students are great at keeping their masks on and in many cases don't seem to need as many breaks as we had anticipated.

Will students have assigned seats?

Yes.

Can students talk during lunch?

No - this is part of the guidance. This is another reason why we need WIN blocks, so that students can talk outside with masks on.

Will in-person students need to bring their laptops to school with them?

Yes.

Why is grade 5 starting on April 14th and not April 5th? Did we get a waiver from DESE?

Yes, we did apply for and receive a waiver for the timing of our 5th grade return to full in-person learning. The DESE waiver process was specifically designed for particular situations, one of which was districts that have grade 5-8 middle schools.

That said, we are trying to speed up the timing for grade 5 for a few reasons. Acknowledging that some 5th grade students have never been in the Chenery building, we would like to give them a chance to get their bearings in a new school on their own without the complication of other students in the building. We would like to let them try this before April break. We think this will give them a better opportunity to adapt to their new school building.

Will students need to go to different classrooms for different classes?

Currently the students in our hybrid model move between two classrooms/teachers (in 5th grade) or four classrooms/teachers (6th-8th grades). When they go to ENCORE classes, students travel to additional spaces. This movement between spaces and teachers will continue in our full in-person model.

If lunch can start as early as 9:50, will there be a snack break later in the day?

We hope so. Snack breaks may be possible during some WIN blocks. Some of this will depend on how teachers and students feel as the new schedule unfolds. We need to work on the schedule before we can guarantee snack breaks, but we do hope to include them.

How will bussing work?

DESE guidance says that buses may operate at the same capacity as they did prior to Covid, which means up to three students per bus bench. Depending on the number of students who opt to take the bus, we are very hopeful that we will have fewer students per bench and that we will be able to provide more distancing.

At this point buses are available to students in most but not all parts of the district.

In the case of our buses to and from Boston, even if 100% of students choose in-person learning and opt to take the bus, we will have no more than two students per bench, and in most cases there will be only one student per bench.

Students will wear masks and have assigned seating on the bus. All windows will be open at least 2".

We encourage families to consider alternate modes of transportation to and from school if possible.

Can families withdraw from bussing and be reimbursed?

Yes.

Call for volunteers! We are looking for volunteers to help with buses and lunch.

Please consider volunteering or applying for a position to help supervise buses and lunchtime. All volunteers will complete a CORI background check and will follow the same Covid mitigation precautions as the rest of the school community.

Will there be after-school programs?

After we determine the details of our educational program, we will slowly add after-school programs. Some will be able to meet outside. We will think about the school day first and activities second.

For grades 6-8 grade students, will all core classes be live-streamed? How firm are the decisions about the remote model?

The decisions are not firm. We think live-streaming will benefit students by allowing for consistency in teachers. It will also allow us to educate students who are quarantining in a more seamless manner. We are not firmly decided but we are leaning towards live-streaming as the better option for grades 6-8.

Can students who have WIN first or last period come and go earlier or later?

No, this will be too logistically difficult.

Will homework expectations change?

Probably. There will be more hours of school so we will have to adjust. Our teachers are very good at figuring how to use homework effectively in order to move the curriculum forward. It is likely that there will be more homework than there has been to date this year. We leave best practice on assigning homework to our teachers.

How do mask breaks work?

Students must be 6 feet apart in order to remove their masks. Most teachers are taking students outside, or occasionally to the cafeteria, for mask breaks. Breaks look slightly different in each teacher team.

Is the district requiring teachers to be vaccinated? Can you tell us how many teachers are vaccinated?

We cannot require teachers to be vaccinated. We did, however, survey our staff and the result of that survey was that 89% of faculty and staff wanted to be vaccinated. We are working to help educators get vaccinations and are grateful for the support of Belmont Helps, which is also assisting in this work.

We may be able to put out an aggregated number of vaccinated school staff members at some points in the future, but cannot share individual medical information.

Will students be able to have extra help sessions with their teachers?

Yes, absolutely. Teachers provide extra help in many ways and are in constant contact with students who need extra support. For remote students the support will continue to be virtual.

Will after-school clubs and activities continue? And if so, will the timing be changed to give in-person students a chance to get home and log on to a remote session?

We are not sure yet what the timing of clubs will be. We will need to get the school day established and then we will work on sorting out after-school activities.

What about after-school activities we already paid for, like Chenery Winds, that currently take place online at 2:30? Will these be rescheduled?

We are going to have to reevaluate all scheduling depending on what we can do in-person and what families preferences are. We may have to reschedule some activities.

Who will be the primary point of contact for remote students?

We haven't decided but there will definitely be a primary point person for Chenery's remote students. We will let you know soon who that person will be.

The Chenery PTO is also working on forming support for remote learners. The PTO is looking for parent volunteers from each grade to facilitate connection between Chenery's remote families. Please fill out [this form](#) if you are interested.

Will fully vaccinated teachers still have to wear masks at all times?

Yes! All teachers will wear masks in school.

How will remote students be supported in live-streamed classrooms?

Simultaneously supporting in-person and remote students is one of the challenges of live-streaming. But our teachers have been doing an excellent job of juggling in-person and remote students this year and they will continue to support all students well.

Will BASEC have an on-site program?

Yes. BASEC is currently operating at Chenery and will likely want to expand their programming to accommodate more children. After-school programs such as BASEC are governed by a different state agency than the schools. They are in touch with their governing agency to create programs that abide by their guidelines. They are also working in conjunction with Wes Chin, Belmont's Director of Health. We are helping BASEC to facilitate their programs by allowing them to use our spaces and will continue to do so. If you have additional questions about BASEC, please contact [Trevor Donahue](#), BASEC Chenery Site Director.

How will remote students take the MCAS?

The MCAS test will be administered in-person, as it always is. Remote students will be given the opportunity to come into the building to take the test. We have reached out to remote families to see whether they would like to come to school for the test, and many have responded positively.

So far we have only received DESE guidance for the 5th grade MCAS test. We are waiting for updated MCAS guidance for grades 6-8.

Why on earth are we doing MCAS?

We are mandated to administer this test. As educators we don't necessarily feel that this is the best use of time. But we understand that the state is requiring us to administer the MCAS in order to comply with federal law. We have asked Governor Baker and Commissioner Riley to consider canceling MCAS testing this year, but at this point we are still required to have our students take the MCAS tests.

We do realize that some students will need extra support and re-teaching key concepts this summer, and we appreciate the need to look at how to accelerate student learning next year. But we don't need MCAS to know how to do this.

Are there any plans to extend the school year?

We will stick with a 180-day school year as usual, but we will also add some summer programming for those students who need it. Our principals and educators are looking at student progress and making note of students who need extra support in order to meet grade-level benchmarks. We will invite some grade 1-8 students to participate in summer learning for ELA or Math or both so that they can get back on track. At the high school we are still thinking about what our summer learning options will look like. More information will be forthcoming on this topic.

Is the decision we submit tomorrow binding?

We need surveys tomorrow in order to make plans. It is binding until options to change on April 30 or May 21.

Any final thoughts?

We received over 100 questions and did our best to answer as many of them as possible. If your question was not answered please feel free to reach out to any of the following people:

- For questions related to daily educational routines, contact the administration at Cheney;
- [Karla Koza](#), Principal
- [Jodie Cohen](#), Assistant Principal Upper School
- [Jonathan Hartunian](#), Assistant Principal Lower School
- [Nicolette Foundas](#), Assistant Principal Encore Programming

- For questions related to lunch, [Dustin O'Brien](#)
- For questions about visual and performing arts, [Arto Asadoorian](#)
- For questions about English learners, [Lindsay Rinder](#)
- For questions about special education, [Ken Kramer](#)
- For general or district-wide questions, [John Phelan](#)

From Principal Koza: We know that asking students and families to make another transition at this point in the year is difficult. But I know that we can do this. We really look forward to seeing your children, either in-person or five days/week consistently on the screen. We will support every child as we work through this change. Please reach out to me with any thoughts or questions.

From Superintendent Phelan: It has been a challenging year for students, families, and staff. We hope that the last 42 days of the school year will be a highlight that students will be able to carry with them into the summer. It is exciting to get back to what we love doing: being with children - one way or another - in a full, consistent program. Your children, our students, are unique and wonderful young people who deserve a lot of attention and time to build relationships with their teachers and peers. We are really looking forward to spending time with them this spring and into the future.